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Statement submitted by Sahkar Social Welfare Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Women in Pakistan; Gender Gap and Honour killings

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Pakistan is a developing country and came into being on in 1947 as a new Muslim state, but civilization first developed in the Indus river valley around 3,000 BC (before Christ) in present Pakistan. The population of Pakistan is about 190 million and more than half part of its people live in rural and backward areas. Pakistan has two genres of laws: sharia and civil law. The constitution of the country categorizes equality between women and men, but despite that setback, in Sindh, there are spreading the honour crimes, dowry system, marriages of women with holy Book, child marriages and forced marriages still remain, sale and purchase of a woman and the giving of girls or women to marry as a form of compensation to the victim's family. In rural areas of Sindh, people mostly purchase a woman through marriage to use her for sowing and harvesting of agriculture and rearing of livestock. There are several strict and brutal societal rites in Pakistan which not only taint the name of humankind but also are against the teaching of Islam, where the religion prohibits the likes of these actions. Furthermore, behind these treacherous acts different offenses have also been commonly committed, such as acid throwing on the faces of women. In fact, the woman could not get a position which should have to be owned by her. According to database of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan there were 987 cases of honour killings with 1096 females and 88 males of whom at least 170 were minors. The above cases reported by HRCP which have observed through various forms of their sources while unreported cases were silent alarming than above figure.

Honour killing

There are a couple words of "honour killing" (Karo Kari) means homicide of a woman and or a man, if any girl or woman caught or labelled with any male in objectionable position, then she (kari) and her co-accused (karo) will be killed by her family or community. Even a woman can prove that she is a victim of rape cases, ultimately, she may be killed by her family in the name of honour and they are proud of what they did. Honour killing is a tough tradition in a tribal antiquated community that is experienced for centuries. According to the historians they claim that honour killing tradition in Pakistan originated with many Baloch tribes of Balochistan and spread to other communities as they migrated to different parts of the Pakistan in the 17th century while Arab progenies migrated to settle in Balochistan. The Sindhi nation has adopted honour killings from a culture of Baloch tribes. As per the report of UNPF, all around the world about 5000 women and girls are killed annually in honour killings and out of the figure approximately, 1000 women are killed in Pakistan per year. It shows clearly that 20 percent of the total figure of honour killings occurs in Pakistan.

Women rights in Islam

Prior to Islam, women were extremely worsened and deprived of their rights and independence by the society and treating women as second-class citizens. Quran and Hadiths declared the respect and honour of women in the religion. The Quran says; "And for women are rights over men, similar to those of men over women." (Qur'an 2:228). Holy prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) said, "Among you the most respectable is the one who respects women and the most disrespectable is the one who disrespect the women."

Gender Gap in Sindh

Sindh province has rich resources, but still stands with a high rate of unemployment, maternal mortality, female illiteracy and gender inequality. According to recent annual gender gap report by World Economic Forum (WEF), Pakistan ranked 144 out of 145, second last in world gender equality. Although, women of Pakistan have earned Oscar awards and Nobel Prizes, unfortunately, the country's rank is increasing towards the bottom of the gender gap Index.

Education in rural areas of Sindh

Illiteracy contributes to the increase of the honour crimes and gender inequality. Approximately half population of the male is illiterate, and two thirds of the female population cannot write even their names, especially who are living in rural areas is upsetting. Among the world, Pakistan is listed as one of the lowest literacy rates, as per data of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which reported that Pakistan is listed at 160th in all countries of the world. There is an alarming situation in Pakistan's rural areas, especially in rural of Sindh where the female literacy rate is between 5 to 15 percent and in various areas the education of girls is banned by their family on cultural and religious grounds. I also belong to rural area of Sindh, I observed that the heinous practice occurs to thrash a woman, home imprisonment, strict and covered dress code, restriction of education or a job in rural Sindh. They considered themselves as respectable to adopt these acts in the society. I also observed that in rural Sindh mostly old-age persons are marrying teenage girls, in-fact, they don't trust owing to unmatched relationship and usually they are very suspicious of their young wives and torture them to keep the control.

Faislos and Jirgas System (Informal Justice system)

Most cases of honour crimes are jointly settled between complainants and respondents in the courts and or in Faislos/Jirgas. Hereafter, a Faislo or Jirga is fixed up through reps of both groups and led by the local tribal chief, Wadera or Sardar then a man or boy who has been proved a guilty in the case has to pay compensation for his life to be secure. While the complainants commonly relatives of the victims, they excuse the respondent due to compensation and force of their relatives, Wadera and Sardar (Landlord).

Furthermore, the major cause of female victims to avoid for reporting their incidents is the ill-mannered attitude by the police, lawyers and prosecutors who would ask shameful interrogations and clear details during the prosecutions usually held in open trials. In the other hand, pressure and attitude of the community are also one of the few reasons to sidestep the cases to report.

Conclusion

The statement concludes that Honour killing remains an unsettled matter as the current rules and their implementation have been unsuccessful to stop the crime that continues still without any fear, in this situation, there is difficult for women to receive justice owing to the existing system of Law and Tribes. Faisla and Jarga system (non-formal justice system) permits local leaders to create decisions based on their knowledge and local trend and traditions. In the other hand, the concepts of honour (gairat) and aboriginal council system (wadera and sardari nizam) often hushes victims of the crimes. The world has to keep an eye on the said system.